E/CONF.39/H/13
10 Oct.1962
ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

Agenda Item: H.3

Czechoslovakia

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND MANAGING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

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WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND MANAGING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

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1. The constant development of production forces calls for systematic improvement in managing the national economy. The growing concentration and specialisation of production requires a form of management which ensures the best co-operation and smooth running of all production processes and economic relations. In a socialist society this co-operation is achieved by the State through a centralised economic plan. Within the comprehensive plan, the economic independence and rights of the local organs and enterprises are constantly being expanded and at the same time the initiative of the workers, freed from capitalist exploitation, is being encouraged. This initiative is an active factor in working out, realising and controlling the comprehensive national economic plan.

2-a/ The workers participation in the management of the national economy is one of the main principles of the socialist society. It stems for the very position of the worker in industry and society. Under socialism workers are the owners of the means of production. This fact is reflected in their efforts to improve the results in the national economy.

b/ Participation in the management, planning and control is laid down in the law, and primarily in the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Article 12, para. 1 of the Constitution reads: "The entire national economy is directed by a State plan of development, worked out and achieved with active participation of the workers."

3-a/ It is the task of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement to organise workers' participation in directing and controlling the national economy.

b/ It is the duty of economic organs at all levels, from enterprise management up to the ministry, to present draft plans to the trade union organisation concerned, take in its views and closely co-operate with it to ensure fulfilment of the plan. The Works' Committee of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement /ROH/ takes part in the preparation of all plans of the enterprise, in its distribution and control. Questions connected with the plan, as for instance the allotment of the wage fund and bonuses, working hours, etc., are directly decided by the ROH Works' Council on behalf of the workers together with the management of the enterprise.

c/ In establishing the plan, the trade union organisation acting as representative of all workers in the State sees to it that the draft plan of the factory, enterprise and economic production units is in harmony with the interests of the State and the workers and meets the needs of the entire national economy. It makes sure that factories and enterprises do not confine themselves to their own local enterprise interests.

d/ The Trade Union organisation sees to it that the welfare extended to the workers corresponds with the planned development of production, within the actual means of the factories and enterprises. Measures taken to ensure production must also correspond to the needs of the workers who are fulfilling planned quotas.

e/ The Factory Committee organises meetings and conferences, where the draft plans are discussed and proposals and observations put forth. Important proposals are incorporated into the plan, while those of lesser scope are carried out directly in the workshops and factories.

f/ Inseparably connected with planning is the timely and correct distribution of the plan. Uniform distribution of the plan helps to

ensure a continued flow of production and a fuller use of the initiative of the workers.

g/ Workers, through their Trade Union organisation, take part also in controlling the fulfilment of the plan. A regular control is carried out every month, three, six and 12 months.

4-a/ There are many different forms of the active participation of the workers in directing, especially preparing, fulfilling and controlling the plan. The most widely used is socialist emulation. More than 80% of all workers in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic are taking part in various forms of socialist emulation, from individual competition up to the "socialist labour teams". A great number of workers participate in the competition, as they realise that their efforts are not for individual gain, but benefit all the workers and that the better the results achieved are, the sooner their standard of living will raise.

b/ Well organised socialist competition yields good economic results, brings out hidden reserves and increases productivity of work. The fulfilment and over-fulfilment of the plan through competition ensure ever increasing wages, the improvement of working, social, cultural and health conditions.

c/ Socialist competiton does not mean increased work load. At present such forms of socialist competition are used to improve the quality of products and to achieve better economic results through the effective use of machinery and equipment, saving of material introduction of new techniques and technology. It also stimulates the efforts of the workers to constantly raise their qualifications, master their trades and increase their economic knowledge. Not less important is the educational influence of competition; the workers pledge themselves to take up functions in various social organisations and to help each other during work and after.

5. Another effective form of direct participation of the workers in the preparation and management of the plan are the technical-economic conferences. These are meetings of workers, shock workers, technicians, engineers and scientists of the whole enterprise who discuss important problems bearing on the development of the entire enterprise or factory. In these meetings the production experiences of the workers are fully utilized. Delegates in these conferences and in membership meetings of the ROH discuss the problems submitted at their place of work by their co-workers and suggest to the conference their ideas and suggestions for the solution of these problems. The decisions of the technical-economic conference are binding for the management in the factories and the enterprise and there are set deadlines for their implementation.

6. One of the most widely extended formsof workers participation in management are production meetings convened by the trade union organisation in the workshop and in the place of work. At these production meetings all workers help to solve problems and decide on suggestions which are decisive for the establishment and realisation of the mobilisation plans. The questions discussed at these production meetings are those concerning the workers and which will help to solve problems of the working place or workshop concerned. Whether this form is effective depends upon how ideas and suggestions of the workers are being used and realised in the production process. Production meetings are called in groups, workshops, in factories and enterprises. It is the duty of the management to carry out the suggestions of the workers.

7-a/ The high rate of development of the national economy in the ČSSR is more and more ensured by utilising and introducing new technical methods, technology and organisation of production, i.e. by the continuous increase of the social productivity of work. Those who introduce, enlarge and use new technical methods are mostly inventors, improvers and innovators. The trade union organisation helps the creative interest and faculty of hundreds of thousands of inventors and innovators to solve important problems of production by asking the management of the enterprise to put forward concrete tasks which represent part of the preparation and establishment of the plan.

b/ Tasks are to be based upon the concrete needs of the factory, workshops and working places and are to be in close connection with the tasks which the enterprise will have to fulfil in the coming year. In order to stimulate whole collectives interest, of inventors and innovators to solve important technical problems, the trade union organisation organises a competition for the best solution of the individual thematic tasks. If certain problems cannot be solved by individuals because of lack of strength and ability, innovators, best workers and technicians work in teams.

8. An important method to ensure the participation of the workers in directing and planning of the national economy is membership meetings of trade union groups, shop organisations and the factory organisation ROH. During the period of preparation and establishment of the plan and during the fulfilment of the plan, the trade union organisation submits to the membership meetings important questions in connection with the ensuring of the further development of production, and the development of the enterprise as a whole or of individual shops. At membership meetings workers are being acquainted with the problems and submit their suggestions and ideas. The draft plan of the factory has to be discussed at membership meetings before being finally adopted.

9-a/The most important method of control of the economy and the ensuring of the effectivity of production, based upon participation of the workers, technicians and all workers are complex analyses of the economic activity of the enterprise and all branches. The main direction of the complex analysis is discussed by the ministry of finance with the Central Council of Trade Unions and by the other ministries with the respective trade unions.

b/ Complex analyses of the economic activitiy carried out every month, three months and 12 months at the individual places of work, in the workshops and factories with the ective participation of all workers. The analysis of the fulfilment of the plan concerns mainly economy, higher productivity of work and the reduction of costs. Workers and trade union organisations together with the management evaluate whether the enterprise kept to the fixed norms, es-

pecially norms determining the development of avarage wages and assignment to the bonus fond. Great attention is given to the ways and means by which the enterprise fulfilled assigned tasks, especially whether it did not make profits by incorrect methods, i.e. whether it cared for the correct maintenance of basic funds, quality and assortment of products or whether it concentrated upon an assortment advantageous for the enterprise, but undesirable from the standpoint of the needs of the national economy, whether it adhered to the principles of work safety, etc.

c/ In ensuring the participation of the workers in the complex analysis the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement gives special attention to setting and maintaining prices. The Commission of Production of the Factory Committee ROH and the Factory Committee itself see to it that the price for a new product is adequate, that there are no un-economical changes of material in production which would increase the price and hurt the consumer. Inadequate prices are discussed in trade union organs and then the management is requested to correct them.

d/ Analyses of economic activity are important for two reasons: they representa certain control of economy and the same time on the basis of this control, measures are taken for the next period.

10-a/ Collective agreements are playing a great organisational and educational role in fulfilling economic plans and continuously improving production.

b/ They play also an important role in developing a greater participation of the workers in the direction of production. In the collective agreement the relation of the directing organs and the workers and their trade union organisation in the production process is reflected. Collective agreements under socialism mean commitments on both sides. They are concluded between the workers, represented by the trade union organisation, and the management of the enterprise for the fulfilment and over-fulfilment of the production quotas and concrete measures concerning the welfare of the workers in the enterprise. It links just demands and satisfies the needs of the workers in harmony with the interests of socialist construction.

c/ Collective agreements are concluded in all factories and enterprises. It is the common task of the management and the trade union organs to establish them. The tasks of trade union organs in the enterprise and factory in the conclusion of the collective agreements are set by the Central Council of Trade Unions in agreement with the decisions of the IVth All-Trade Union Conference. The decisions of the IVth All-Trade Union Conference, which have been adopted as law by the National Assembly, are also binding for the management and it is the duty of production units to conclude a collective agreement with basic trade union organisations.

11-a/ The Budget of the Work's Funds is included in the collective agreement. The Work's fund is an important link in the system of material stimulis and a form of collective material interest of workers in the good economy of the enterprise.

b/ On resolutions of the membership meeting of the trade union organisation the work funds is used for:

- cultural, social, health and sport purposes, especially for investments of permanent value and the grant of contributions and loans for housing construction;

- scholarships to employees of the enterprise;

- rest in recreational centres and spas;

- collective and individual non-monetary rewards of workers of the enterprise for exceptional work achievement especially through socialist competition, the innovators' and inventors' movement, creative participation in the direction of the enterprise and solution of production problems.

c/ The trade union organisation has the right to decide on the use and control of the budget. During the year it regularly reports to the workers and presents the results of economising with the funds for discussion.

The main source of income for the work's funds is the saving done

by the enterprise. Every 3 and 12 months the ministry concerned allots to the fund a share of the enterprise's income based upon its economic achievements. If the enterprise overfulfils its quota the share of their workers' fund is larger, but if the plan is not fulfilled, the share is smaller.

The fund is an effective means to develop the creative initiative of the workers and to increase their participation in the direction of the enterprise. In our experience works' funds proved to be useful to stimulate the material interest of workers and technicians for the fulfilment and over-fulfilment of production tasks. At the same time they are an important means of financing activities an the interest of the workers.

We showed several main forms of direct workers' participation in the direction of the national economy. With the development of socialist society, new forms will always be created in accordance with the standard of organisation and direction. It is at the same time the expression of ever greater democratisation of the socialist society.